

The major problem confronting the people of the United States and free peoples everywhere in the last half of the Twentieth Century is the threat to peace and freedom presented by the militant aggressiveness of international communism. A major weakness in this struggle is lack of adequate understanding of the character of the challenge which communism presents.

I am convinced that we are on the right side in this struggle and that we are well ahead now in its major aspects. But if we are to maintain our advantage and assure victory in the struggle, we must develop, not only among the leaders, but among the people of the free world a better understanding of the threat which confronts us.

The question is not one of being for or against communism. The time is long past when any significant number of Americans contend that communism is no particular concern of theirs. Few can still believe that communism is simply a curious and twisted philosophy which happens to appeal to a certain number of zealots but which constitutes no serious threat to the interests or ideals of free society.

The days of indifference are gone. The danger today in our attitude toward communism is of a very different kind. It lies in the fact that we have come to abhor communism so much that we no longer recognize the necessity of understanding it.

We see the obvious dangers. We recognize that we must retain our present military and economic advantage over the communist bloc, an advantage which deters a hot war and which counters the communist threat in the cold war. In the fields of rocket technology and space exploration, we have risen to the challenge and we will keep the lead that we have gained. There is no question that the American people generally will support whatever programs our leaders initiate in these fields.

What we must realize is that this struggle probably will not be decided in the military, economic, or scientific areas, important as these are. The battle in

which we are engaged is primarily one of ideas. The test is not so much of arms but of faith.

If we are to win a contest of ideas we must know their ideas as well as our own. Our knowledge must not be superficial. We cannot be content with simply an intuition that communism is wrong. It is not enough to rest our case alone on the assertions, true as they are, that communism denies God, enslaves men, and destroys justice.

We must recognize that the appeal of the communist idea is not to the masses, as the communists would have us believe, but more often to an intelligent minority in newly developing countries who are trying to decide which system offers the best and surest road to progress.

We must cut through the exterior to the very heart of the communist idea. We must come to understand the weaknesses of communism as a system—why after more than forty years on trial it continues to disappoint so many aspirations, why it has failed in its promise of equality in abundance, why it has produced a whole library of disillusionment and a steady stream of men, women and children seeking to escape its blight.

But we must also come to understand its strength—why it has so securely entrenched itself in the USSR, why it has been able to accomplish what it has in the field of education and science, why in some of the problem areas of the world it continues to appeal to leaders aspiring to a better life for their people.

It is to find the answers to these questions that in this statement I want to discuss communism as an idea—its economic philosophy, its philosophy of law and politics, its philosophy of history.

This statement will admittedly not be simple because the subject is complex.

It will not be brief because nothing less than a knowledge in depth of the communist idea is necessary if we are to deal with it effectively.

In discussing the idea I will not offer programs to meet it. I intend in a later statement to discuss the tactics and vul-

I anticipate that some might understandably ask the question—why such a lengthy discussion of communism when everybody is against it already?

If the Free World is to win this struggle, we must have men and women who not only are against communism but who know why they are against it and who know what they are going to do about it. Communism is a false idea, and the answer to a false idea is truth, not ignorance.

One of the fundamentals of the communist philosophy is a belief that societies pass inevitably through certain stages. Each of these stages is supposed to generate the necessity for its successor. Feudalism contained within its loins the seed of capitalism; capitalism was, in other words, to supplant feudalism. Capitalism, in turn, moves inevitably toward a climax in which it will be supplanted by its appointed successor, communism. All of these things are matters of necessity and there is nothing men can do to change the inflexible sequence which history imposes.

It is a part of this philosophy that as society moves along its predestined way, each stage of development is dominated by a particular class. Feudalism was dominated by the aristocracy; capitalism by something called the bourgeoisie; communism by the proletariat. During any particular stage of society's development the whole of human life within that society is run and rigged for the benefit of the dominant class; no one else counts for anything and the most he can expect is the left-over scraps. In the end, of course, with the final triumph of communism, classes will disappear—what was formerly the proletariat will expand so that it is the only class, and since there are no longer any outsiders that it can dominate, there will in effect be no classes at all.

Now this theory of successive stages of development makes it clear that if we are to understand communism, we must understand the communist view of capi-

theory, capitalism contains within itself the germs of communism. The communist notion of capitalism is that it is a market economy, an economy of "free trade, free selling and buying" to quote the Manifesto again. It follows from this that since communism inevitably supplants and destroys capitalism it cannot itself be anything like market economy.

"The fundamental belief of the communist economic philosophy therefore is a negative one, namely, a belief that whatever the economic system of mature communism may turn out to be, it cannot be a market economy, it cannot--in the words of the Communist Manifesto--be an economy based on "free trade, free selling and buying."

It may be well at this point to digress for the purpose of reciting the curious fact that the literature of communism contains so many praises for the achievements of capitalism. The Manifesto contains these words about the market economy of capitalism and its alleged overlords, the bourgeoisie:

"It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former migrations of nations and crusades. . . . The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years (the Manifesto speaks from the year 1848), has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground--what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?"

Marx and Engels could afford this praise for capitalism because they supposed it would everywhere be succeeded by communism, a stage of society whose

achievements of capitalism. Communism would build on capitalism and bring a new economy that would make the capitalist world look like a poor house. Those who constituted the dominant class of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, would have performed their historic mission and would be dismissed from the scene—dismissed without thanks, of course, for after all they only accomplished what was foreordained by the forces of history, forces that were now to throw them into the discard like the husk of a sprouting seed.

One of the most startling gaps in the communist theory is the lack of any clear notion of how a communist economy would be organized. In the writings of the great founders of communism there is virtually nothing on this subject. This gap was not an oversight, but was in fact a necessary consequence of the general theory of communism. That theory taught, in effect, that as a society moves inevitably from one level of development to another, there is no way of knowing what the next stage will demand until in fact it has arrived. Communism will supplant and destroy the market economy of capitalism. What will its own economy be like? That we cannot know until we are there and have a chance to see what the world looks like without any institution resembling an economic market. The Manifesto, in fact, expresses a deep contempt for "Utopian Socialists" who propose "an organization of society especially contrived" by them, instead of waiting out the verdict of history and depending on the "spontaneous class organization of the proletariat." The communist economy would organize itself according to principles that would become apparent only when the arena had been cleared of the market principle.

Operating then, in this vacuum of guidance left behind by their prophets, how did the founders of the Soviet Union proceed to organize their new economy? The answer is that they applied as faithfully as they could the teachings of their masters. Since those teachings were essentially negative, their actions had to have the same quality. They started by attempting to root out from the Russian scene every vestige of the market prin-

ciple, even discouraging the use of money altogether. The production and distribution of goods were put under central direction, the theory being that the flow of goods would be directed by social need without reference to principles of profit and loss. This experiment began in 1919 and came to an abrupt end in March of 1921. It was a catastrophic failure. It brought with it administrative chaos and an almost inconceivable disorder in economic affairs, culminating in appalling shortages of the most elementary necessities.

Competent scholars estimate its cost in Russian lives at 5,000,000.

The official Russian version of this experiment does not deny that it was an enormous failure. It attributes that failure to inexperience and to a mythical continuation of military operations, which had in fact almost wholly ceased. Meanwhile the Russian economy has been moving steadily toward the market principle.

The flow of labor is controlled by wages, so that the price of labor is itself largely set by market forces. The spread from top to bottom of industrial wages is in many cases wider than it is in this country. Managerial efficiency is promoted by substantial economic incentives in the form of bonuses and even more substantial perquisites of various kinds. Enterprises are run on a profit and loss basis. Indeed, there are all the paraphernalia of an advanced commercial society, with lawyers, accountants, balance sheets, taxes of many kinds, direct and indirect, and finally even the pressures of a creeping inflation.

The allocation of resources in Russia probably now comes about as close to being controlled by the market principle as is possible where the government owns all the instruments of production. Russian economists speak learnedly of following the "Method of Balances."

This impressive phrase stands for a very simple idea. It means that in directing production and establishing prices an effort is made to come out even, so that goods for which there is an insufficient

demand will not pile up, while shortages will pile up. In the end, demand exceeds supply. The "Method of Balances" turns out to be something a lot of us learned about in school as the law of supply and demand.

All of this is not to say that the Russian economy has fully realized the market principle. There are two obstacles that block such a development. The first lies in the fact that there is a painful tension between what has to be done to run the economy efficiently and what ought to be happening according to orthodox theory. The result is that the Russian economist has to be able to speak out of both sides of his mouth at the same time. He has to be prepared at all times for sudden shifts of the party line. If today he is condemned as an "unprincipled revisionist" who apes capitalist methods, tomorrow he may be jerked from the scene for having fallen into a "sterile orthodoxy," not realizing that Marxism is a developing and creative science.

The other obstacle to the realization of a free market lies in the simple fact that the government owns the whole of industry. This means, for one thing, that the industrial units are huge, so that all of steel, or all of cosmetics, for example, is under a single direction. This naturally creates the economic condition known as oligopoly and the imperfectly functioning market which attends that condition.

Furthermore, a realization of the market principle would require the managers of the various units of industry to act as if they were doing something they are not, that is, as if they were directing independent enterprises. Understandably there is a considerable reluctance to assume this fictitious role, since the manager's reward for an inconvenient independence may well be a trip to Siberia where he is likely nowadays, they say, to be made chief bookkeeper in a tiny power plant three hundred miles from the nearest town. Meanwhile, a constant theme of complaint by Moscow against the managers is that they are too "cousinly" with one another and that they are too addicted to "back-scratching." They ought to be acting like capitalistic entre-

preneurs but they find this a little difficult. It is a loss of the same loss.

One of the most familiar refrains of communist propaganda is that "capitalism is dying of its internal contradictions." In fact, it would be hard to imagine a system more tortured by internal contradictions than present-day Russia. It constantly has to preach one way and act another. When Russian economists and managers discover that they have to do something that seems to contradict the prophets, they usually don't know which of three justifications—all hazardous—they ought to attempt: (1) to explain their action as a temporary departure from Marxist propriety to be corrected in a more propitious future; (2) to show that what they are doing can be justified by the inherited text if it is read carefully and between the lines; or (3) to invoke the cliché that Marxism is a progressive science that learns by experience—we can't, after all, expect Marx, Engels, and Lenin to have foreseen everything.

These inner tensions and perplexities help to explain the startling "shifts in the party line" that characterize all of the communist countries. It is true that these shifts sometimes reflect the outcome of a subterranean personal power struggle within the party. But we must remember that they also at times result from the struggles of conscientious men trying to fit an inconvenient text to the facts of reality.

The yawning gap in communist theory, by which it says nothing about how the economy shall be run except that it shall not be by the market principle, will continue to create tensions, probably of mounting intensity, within and among the communist nations. The most painful compromise that it has so far necessitated occurred when it was decided that trade among the satellite countries should be governed by the prices set on the world market.

This embarrassing concession to necessity recognized, on the one hand, that a price cannot be meaningful unless it is set by something like a market, and, on the other, the inability of the communist



system to develop a reliable pricing system within its own government managed economy.

The communist theory has now had a chance to prove itself by an experience extending over two generations in a great nation of huge human and material resources. What can we learn from this experience? We can learn, first of all, that it is impossible to run an advanced economy successfully without resort to some variant of the market principle. In time of war, when costs are largely immaterial and all human efforts converge on a single goal, the market principle can be subordinated. In a primitive society, where men live on the verge of extinction and all must be content with the same meager ration, the market principle largely loses its relevance. But when society's aim is to satisfy diverse human wants and to deploy its productive facilities in such a way as to satisfy those wants in accordance with their intensity-- their intensity as felt by those who have the wants-- there is and can be no substitute for the market principle. This the Russian experience proves abundantly. That experience also raises serious doubt whether the market principle can be realized within an economy wholly owned by the government.

The second great lesson of the Russian experience is of deeper import. It is that communism is utterly wrong about its most basic premise-- the premise that underlies everything it has to say about economics, law, philosophy, morality and religion. Communism starts with the proposition that there are no universal truths or general truths of human nature. According to its teachings there is nothing one human age can say to another about the proper ordering of society or about such subjects as justice, freedom, and equality. Everything depends on the stage of society and the economic class that is in power at a particular time.

In the light of this fundamental belief or rather, this unbending and all-pervasive disbelief--it is clear why communism had to insist that what was true for capitalism could not be true for communism. Among the truths scheduled to die

with capitalism was the notion that economic life could be usefully ordered by a market. If this truth seems still to be alive, orthodox communist doctrine has to label it as an illusion, a ghost left behind by an age now being surpassed. At the present time this particular capitalist ghost seems to have moved in on the Russian economy and threatens to become a permanent guest at the communist banquet. Let us hope it will soon be joined by some other ghosts, such as freedom, political equality, religion and constitutionalism.

This brings me to the communist view of law and politics. Of the communist legal and political philosophy, we can almost say that there is none. This lack is, again, not an accident, but is an integral part of the systematic negations which make up the communist philosophy.

According to Marx and Engels the whole life of any society is fundamentally determined by the organization of its economy. What men will believe; what gods, if any, they will worship; how they will choose their leaders or let their leaders choose themselves; how they will interpret the world about them;--all of these are basically determined by economic interests and relations. In the jargon of communism: religion, morality, philosophy, political science and law constitute a "superstructure" which reflects the underlying economic organization of a particular society. It follows that subjects which fall within the "superstructure" permit of no general truths; for example, what is true for law and political science under capitalism cannot be true under communism.

I have said we can almost assert that there is no communist philosophy of law and political science. The little there is can be briefly stated. It consists in the assumption that after the revolution there will be a dictatorship (called the dictatorship of the proletariat) and that this dictatorship will for a while find it necessary to utilize some of the familiar political and legal institutions, such as courts. (There is an incredibly tortured literature about just how these institutions are to be utilized and with what

modifications.) When, however, mature communism is achieved, law will disappear in the consecrated phrase, "will wither away." There will be no voting, no parliaments, no judges, no policemen, no prisons--no problems. There will simply be factories and fields and a happy populace peacefully revelling in the abundance of their output.

As with economic theory, there was a time in the history of the Soviet regime when an attempt was made to take seriously the absurdities of this communist theory of law and state. For about a decade during the thirties an influential doctrine was called "the commodity exchange theory of law." According to this theory, the fundamental fact about capitalism is that it is built on the economic institution of exchange. In accordance with the doctrine of the "superstructure" all political and legal institutions under capitalism must therefore be permeated and shaped by the concept of exchange. Indeed, the theory went further. Even the rules of morality are based on exchange, for is there not a kind of tacit deal implied even in the golden rule, "Do unto others, as you would be done by?" Now the realization of communism, which is the negation of capitalism, requires the utter rooting out of any notion of exchange in the communist economy. But when exchange has disappeared, the political, legal and moral superstructure that was built on it will also disappear. Therefore, under mature communism there will not only be no capitalistic legal and political institutions, there will be no law whatever, no state, no morality---for all of these in some measure reflect the underlying notion of an exchange or "deal" among men.

The high priest of this doctrine was Eugene Pashukanis. His reign came to an abrupt end in 1937 as the inconvenience of his teachings began to become apparent. With an irony befitting the career of one who predicted that communism would bring an end to law and legal processes, Pashukanis was quietly taken off and shot without even the semblance of a trial.

As in the case of economics, since Pashukanis's liquidation there has de-

veloped in Russian intellectual life a substantial group marked for capitalistic legal and political theories. But while Russian economists seem ashamed of their concessions to the market principle, Russian lawyers openly boast of their legal and political system, claiming for it that it does everything that equivalent "bourgeois" institutions do, only better. This boast has to be muted somewhat, because it still remains a matter of dogma that under mature communism law and the state will disappear. This embarrassing aspect of their inherited doctrine the Soviet theorists try to keep as much as possible under the table. They cannot, however, openly renounce it without heresy, and heresy in the Soviet Union, be it remembered, still requires a very active taste for extinction.

One of the leading books on Soviet legal and political theory is edited by a lawyer who is well-known in this country, the late Andrei Vyshinsky. In the table-pounding manner he made famous in the U. N., Vyshinsky praises Soviet legal and political institutions to the skies and contrasts their wholesome purity with the "putrid vapors" emanating from the capitalist countries. He points out, for example, that in Russia the voting age is 18, while in many capitalist countries it is 21.

The capitalists thus disenfranchise millions of young men and women, because, says Vyshinsky, it is feared they may not yet have acquired a properly safe "bourgeois" mentality. As one reads arguments like this spelled out with the greatest solemnity, and learns all about the "safeguards" of the Soviet Constitution, it comes as a curious shock to find it openly declared that in the Soviet Union only one political party can legally exist and that the Soviet Constitution is "the only constitution in the world which frankly declares the directing role of the party in the state."

One wonders what all the fuss about voting qualifications is about, if the voters are in the end permitted only to vote for the candidates chosen by the only political party permitted to exist. The plain fact is, of course, that everything in the Soviet Constitution relating to public participation in political decisions is a

facade concealing the real instrument of power that lies in the communist party. It has been said that hypocrisy is vice's tribute to virtue. The holding of elections in which the electorate is given no choice may similarly be described as an attempt by communism to salve its uneasy conscience. Knowing that it cannot achieve representative democracy, it seems to feel better if it adopts its empty forms.

When one reflects on it, it is an astounding thing that a great and powerful nation in the second half of the twentieth century should still leave its destinies to be determined by intra-party intrigue, that it should have developed no political institutions capable of giving to its people a really effective voice in their government, that it should lack any openly declared and lawful procedure by which the succession of one ruler to another could be determined. Some are inclined to seek an explanation for this condition in Russian history with its bloody and irregular successions of Czars. But this is to forget that even in England, the mother of parliaments, there were once in times long gone by, some pretty raw doings behind palace walls and some unseemingly and even bloody struggles for the throne.

But where other nations have worked gradually toward stable political institutions guaranteeing the integrity of their governments, Russia has remained in a state of arrested development. That state will continue until the Russian leaders have the courage to declare openly that the legal and political philosophy of Marx, Engels and Lenin is fundamentally mistaken and must be abandoned.

How heavy the burden of the inherited communist philosophy is becomes clear when the concept of law itself is under discussion. Throughout the ages, among men of all nations and creeds, law has generally been thought of as a curb on arbitrary power. It has been conceived as a way of substituting reason for force in the decision of disputes, thus liberating human energies for the pursuit of aims more worthy of man's destiny than brute survival or the domination of one's fellows. No one has supposed that these ideals have ever been fully realized in

any society. Like every human institution, it has been subject to the selfish purposes and of losing its course through a confusion of purposes. But during most of the world's history, men have thought that the questions worthy of discussion were how the institutions of law could be shaped so that they might not be perverted into instruments of power or lose the sense of their high mission through sloth or ignorance.

What is the communist attitude toward this intellectual enterprise in which so many great thinkers of so many past ages have joined? Communism consigns all of it to the ashcan of history as a fraud and delusion, beneath the contempt of communist science. How, then, is law defined today in Russia? We have an authoritative answer. It is declared to be "the totality of the rules of conduct expressing the will of the dominant class, designed to promote those relationships that are advantageous and agreeable to the dominant class."

Law in the Soviet Union is not conceived as a check on power; it is openly and proudly an expression of power. In this conception surely, if anywhere, the bankruptcy of communism as a moral philosophy openly declares itself.

It is vitally important to emphasize again that all of the truly imposing absurdities achieved by communist thought—in whatever field: in economics, in politics, in law, in morality— that all of these trace back to a single common source. That origin lies in a belief that nothing of universal validity can be said of human nature, that there are no principles, values or moral truths that stand above a particular age or a particular phase in the evolution of society. This profound negation lies at the very heart of the communist philosophy and gives to it both its motive force and its awesome capacity for destruction.

It is this central negation that makes communism radically inconsistent with the ideal of human freedom. As with other "bourgeois" virtues, once dismissed contemptuously, Soviet writers have now taken up the line that only under communism can men realize "true freedom."

This line may even have a certain persuasiveness for Russians in that individuals tend to prize those freedoms they are familiar with and not to miss those they have never enjoyed. A Russian transplanted suddenly to American soil might well feel for a time "unfree" in the sense that he would be confronted with the burden of making choices that he was unaccustomed to making and that he would regard as onerous. But the problem of freedom goes deeper than the psychological conditioning of any particular individual. It touches the very roots of man's fundamental conception of himself.

The communist philosophy is basically inconsistent with the ideal of freedom because it denies that there can be any standard of moral truth by which the actions of any given social order may be judged. If the individual says to government, "Thus far may you go, but no farther," he necessarily appeals to some principle of rightness that stands above his particular form of government. It is precisely the possibility of any such standard that communism radically and uncompromisingly denies. Marx and Engels had nothing but sneers for the idea that there are "eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society."

They contend that there are no eternal truths. All ideas of right and wrong come from the social system under which one lives. If that system requires tyranny and oppression then tyranny and oppression must within that system be accepted; there can be no higher court of appeal.

Not only do the premises of communist philosophy make any coherent theory of freedom impossible, but the actual structure of the Soviet regime is such that no true sense of freedom can ever develop under it. To see why this is so, it is useful to accept the communist ideology provisionally and reason the matter out purely in terms of what may be called human engineering. Let us concede that a struggle for political power goes on in all countries and let us assume in keeping with Marxist views that this struggle has absolutely nothing to do with right and wrong. Even from this perversely brutal

point of view, it is clear why a sense of freedom is denied by the Soviet regime. In a constitutional democracy the struggle for political power is assigned to a definite arena: it is roped off, so to speak, from the rest of life. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there is no clear distinction between politics and economics, or between politics and other human activities. No barriers exist to define what is a political question and what is not. Instead of being ordered and canalized as it is in constitutional democracies, the struggle for political power in Russia pervades, or can at any time pervade every department of life. For this reason there is no area of human interest—the intellectual, literary, scientific, artistic or religious—that may not at any time become a battleground of this struggle.

Take, for example, the situation of a Soviet architect. Today without doubt he enjoys a certain security: he is not likely to lie awake fearing the dread knock at the door at midnight. Furthermore, he may now see opening before him in the practice of his profession a degree of artistic freedom that his predecessors did not enjoy. But he can never be sure that he will not wake up tomorrow morning and read in the papers that a new "line" has been laid down for architecture, since his profession, like every other, can at any moment be drawn into the struggle for power. He can never know the security enjoyed by those who live under a system where the struggle for political power is fenced off, as it were, from the other concerns of life. When Soviet "politics" invades a field like architecture, it cannot be said to spread beyond its proper boundaries, for it has none. It is precisely this defect in the Soviet regime that in the long run prevents the realization of the ideal of "freedom under communism."

It is only in the constitutional democracies that the human spirit can be permanently free to unfold itself in as many directions as are opened up for it by its creative urge. Only such governments can achieve diversity without disintegration, for only they know the full meaning of "those wise restraints that make men free."

Since the communist philosophy of his-



tory is the central core of its ideology, that all the other themes I have so far discussed. Briefly stated the communist philosophy of history is that man does not make history, but is made by it.

Though communism denies to man the capacity to shape his own destiny, it does accord to him a remarkable capacity to foresee in great detail just what the future will impose on him. The literature of communism is full of prophecies, tacit and explicit. Probably no human faith ever claimed so confidently that it knew so much about the future. Certainly none ever ran up a greater number of bad guesses. On a rough estimate the communist record for mistaken prophecies stands at about one hundred per cent.

Among the conclusions about the future that were implicit in the communist philosophy, or were drawn from it by its prophets, we can name the following:

That communism will first establish itself in countries of the most advanced capitalism;

That in such countries society will gradually split itself into two classes, with the rich becoming fewer and richer, the laboring masses sinking steadily to a bare level of existence;

That under capitalism colonialism will increase as each capitalistic nation seeks more and more outlets for its surplus production;

That in capitalist countries labor unions will inevitably take the lead in bringing about the communist revolution;

That as soon as communism is firmly established steps will be taken toward the elimination of the capitalist market and capitalist political and legal institutions, etc., etc.

As with other aspects of communism, this record of bad guesses is no accident. It derives from the basic assumption of Marxism that man has no power to mold his institutions to meet problems as they arise, that he is caught up in a current of history which carries him inevitably toward his predestined goal. A philosophy which embraces this view of man's plight is constitutionally incapable of predicting the steps man will take to

shape his own destiny, precisely because it has in advance decided on any such steps to be impossible. Communism in this respect is like a man standing on the bank of a rising river and observing what appears to be a log lodged against the opposite shore. Assuming that what he observes is an inert object, he naturally predicts that the log will eventually be carried away by the rising flood waters. When the log turns out to be a living creature and steps safely out of the water, the observer is, of course, profoundly surprised. Communism, it must be confessed, has shown a remarkable capacity to absorb such shocks, for it has survived many of them. In the long run, however, it seems inevitable that the communist brain will inflict serious damage upon itself by the tortured rationalizations with which it has to explain each successive bad guess.

This brings us to the final issue. Why is it that with all its brutalities and absurdities communism still retains an active appeal for the minds and hearts of many intelligent men and women? For we must never forget that this appeal does exist.

It is true that in the United States and many other countries the fringe of serious thought represented by active communist belief has become abraded to the point of near extinction. It is also the fact that many people everywhere adhere to groups dominated by communist leadership who have only the slightest inkling of communism as a system of ideas. Then again we must remember that in the communist countries themselves there are many intelligent, loyal and hardworking citizens, thoroughly acquainted with the communist philosophy, who view that philosophy with a quiet disdain, not unmixed with a certain sardonic pleasure of the sort that goes with witnessing, from a choice seat, a comedy of errors that is unfortunately also a tragedy. Finally, we must not confuse every "gain of communism" with a gain of adherents to communist beliefs. In particular, we should not mistake the acceptance of technical and economic aid from Moscow as a conversion to the communist faith, though the contacts thus established may of course open the way

for a propagation of that faith.

With all this said, and with surface appearance discounted in every proper way, the tragic fact remains that communism as a faith remains a potent force in the world of ideas today. It is an even more tragic fact that that faith can sometimes appeal not only to opportunists and adventurers, but also to men of dedicated idealism. How does this come about?

To answer this question we have to ask another: What are the ingredients that go to make up a successful fighting faith, a faith that will enlist the devotion and fanaticism of its adherents, that will let loose on the world that unaccommodating creature, "the true believer"?

I think that such a faith must be made up of at least three ingredients.

*First.* It must lift its adherents above the dread sense of being alone and make them feel themselves members of a brotherhood.

*Second.* It must make its adherents believe that in working for the objectives of their faith they are moving in step with nature, or with the forces of history, or with the divine will.

*Third.* It must be a faith that gives to its adherents a sense of being lifted above the concerns that consume the lives of the non-believing.

All of these ingredients are furnished in abundance by communism. In the communist philosophy the first two ingredients are fused into one doubly effective amalgam. To become a communist is no longer to be alone, but to join in the march of a great, oppressed mass of humanity called "the proletariat." This silent, faceless army is being carried inevitably to its goal by the unseen forces of history. There is thus a double identification. History belongs to the proletariat, the proletariat belongs to history. By joining in this great march the communist not only gains human companions but a sense of responding to the great pull of the universe itself.

Now the picture I have just painted is not one that even the most devout communist can comfortably carry about with him at all times. Indeed, there are prob-

ably few communists who do not, even in their moments of highest faith, sense some of the fictions and contradictions of the dream to which they are committed. The absurdities of the communist ideology are, however, by no means immediately apparent to the new convert, who is likely to be intrigued rather by the difficulty of understanding them. The old believer sees no reason to point out these absurdities, partly because he does not wish to undermine the faith of the young, and partly because he has become inured to them, has learned to live with them at peace, and does not want to disturb his own adjustment to them.

One of the key fictions of the communist edifice of thought is the belief that there is in modern industrial society an identifiable class of people called "the proletariat." That such a class would develop was not a bad guess in 1848 and Marx had other economists with him in making this guess. As usual, history perversely took the wrong turn. And as usual, this has caused communism no particular embarrassment, for it continues with diminished ardor, to be sure--to talk about the proletariat as if it were actually there. But professing to see things that are not there is often a sign of faith and furnishes, in any event, a bond of union among believers.

To many of its American critics, communism has appeared as a kind of nightmare. Like awakened sleepers still recoiling from the shock of their dream, these critics forget that the nightmare is after all shot through and through with absurdities. The result is to lend to the communist ideology a substance that in fact it does not possess. If in moments of doubt the communist is inclined to feel that his philosophy is made of air and tinsel, he is reassured and brought back into the fold when he recalls that its critics have declared this philosophy to be profoundly and powerfully vicious.

Part of the tarnish that an uncomplaisant history has visited on the communist prophecies has in recent years been removed by the achievements of Russian technology. It is now possible to identify communism with the land that

has the highest success rate. It is the hugest outdoor rallies, the most colossal statues and the space satellites that weigh the most tons. It is not difficult to make all this appear as a kind of belated flowering of the promises communism began holding out more than a hundred years ago. It is easy to make men forget that none of the solid accomplishments of modern Russia came about by methods remotely resembling anything anticipated by Marx, Engels or Lenin.

In suggesting the ingredients that go to make up a successful fighting faith, I stated that such a faith must be one "that gives to its adherents a sense of being lifted above the concerns that consume the lives of the non-believing." I have purposely left this aspect of the communist faith to the last for it is here that the truly nightmarish quality of that faith manifests itself.

Not that it is any objection to a faith that it enables those sharing it to be indifferent to things that seem important to others. The crucial question is, what is it that men are told not to heed? As to the communist faith there is no ambiguity on this score. It tells men to forget all the teachings of the ages about government, law and morality. We are told to cast off the intellectual burden left behind by men like Confucius, Mencius, Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas, Kant, and Bentham. There are no "eternal truths" about society. There is no science of social architecture. Only the simple-minded can believe that there are principles guiding the creation of sound legal and political institutions. For the enlightened there is only one rule: Smash the existing "bourgeois" economic and legal order and leave the rest to the "spontaneous class organization of the proletariat."

In diplomatic dealings the Russians display great respect for American military and economic power, but consider us hopelessly naive in matters political. We are still concerned with trifles they feel themselves long since to have left behind—trifles like: How do you help a people to realize self-government who have had no experience with its necessary forms and restraints? How following the overthrow of a tyranny do you

suggest steps that will prevent a  
term in dictatorship from hardening into  
a second tyranny?

It is not that the communists have ideas about sound government that differ from ours. According to strict communist theory there can be no ideas on such a subject. If a gray market for such ideas has gradually developed in Russia it has not yet reached the point of being ready for the export trade. Russia has engineers able to help the underdeveloped countries build roads and dams, and there is no reason to question the competence of these engineers. But whoever heard of Russia sending an expert in political institutions to help a new country design an appropriate form of representative self-government? Not only would such a mission stand in ludicrous incongruity with the present situation of the communist countries in Europe; it would be a repudiation of the basic premises of the whole communist philosophy.

Even in the economic field, Russia really has nothing to offer the rest of the world but negations. For a long time after the establishment of the Soviet regime it was actively disputed in Russia whether for communism there is any such thing as an "economic law."

Communist ideology has had gradually to bend before the plain fact that such laws exist. But Russia has as yet developed no economic institutions that are more than distorted shadows of their capitalist equivalents. Russia may help a new country to develop electric power. It has nothing to say about the social institutions that will determine how that power will be utilized for the good of the whole people.

This great vacuum that lies in the heart of communism explains not only why its philosophy is in the long run so destructive of everything human, but why in the short run it can be so successful. Consider, for example, what it can offer to the leader of a successful revolution. A cruel dictatorship has been overthrown. It has to be overthrown by force because it permitted no elections or never counted the vote honestly. Following the successful revolt, there must be an interval during which order is kept by something approaching a dictator.

ship. Sooner or later, if the revolution is not to belie its democratic professions, some movement must be made toward representative self-government. This is a period of great difficulty. There is no mystery about its problems. They fit into an almost classic pattern known from antiquity. The revolutionary leaders must find some accommodation with what is left of the old regime. Sooner or later the firing squad must be retired. Even when this is done vengeful hatreds continue to endanger the successful operations of parliamentary government. Among the revolutionary party, men who were once united in overthrowing plain injustice become divided on the question of what constitutes a just new order. Militant zealots, useful in the barricades, are too rough for civil government and must be curbed. If curbed too severely, they may take up arms against the new government. etc., etc. What can communism offer the revolutionary leader caught in this ancient and familiar quandary? It can, of course, offer him material aid. But it can offer him something more significant and infinitely more dangerous, a clear conscience in taking the easy course. It can tell him to forget about elections and his promises of democracy and freedom. It can support this advice with an imposing library of pseudoscience clothing despotism with the appearance of intellectual respectability.

The internal stability of the present Russian government lends an additional persuasiveness to this appeal. If Russia can get along without elections, why can't we? Men forget that it is a common characteristic of dictatorships to enjoy internal truces that may extend over decades, only to have the struggle for power renew itself when the problem of a succession arises. This is a pattern written across centuries of man's struggle for forms of government consistent with human dignity. It is said that the struggle for power cannot under modern conditions, with modern armies and modern weapons, take the form of a prolonged civil war. That is no doubt true in a developed economy like that of Russia. The shift in power when it comes may involve only a few quick maneuvers within the apparatus of the party, which have their only outward manifestation in purges or banishments that seal the

results. But the fact remains that the fate of millions will be determined by processes which take no account of their interests or wishes, in which they are granted no participation and which they are not even permitted to observe.

It must not be forgotten that modern Russia was for an indefinite period prior to 1953 governed by a tyranny. This is admitted in Russia today. To be sure, the term "tyranny" is not used, because according to the communist philosophy a term like that betokens a naive and outdated view of the significance of governmental forms. The Soviet term is "the cult of personality." According to the official explanation Stalin and his followers in some mysterious way became infected with a mistaken view of Stalin's proper role. According to ancient wisdom this was because Stalin ruled without the check of constitutional forms and without effective popular participation in his government. In the words of Aristotle, written some twenty-three centuries ago, "This is why we do not permit a man to rule but the principle of law, because a man rules in his own interest, and becomes a tyrant."

It is plain that Stalin at some point became a tyrant. According to Aristotle this was because Russia did not base its government on the principle of law. According to the communist theory some inexplicable slippage of the gears, some accidental countercurrent of history, led Stalin to embrace incorrect notions about himself.

If mankind is to survive at a level of dignity worthy of its great past, we must help the world recapture some sense of the teachings of the great thinkers of former ages. It must come again to see that sound legal and political institutions not only express man's highest ideal of what he may become, but that they are indispensable instruments for enabling him to realize that ideal. It would be comforting to believe that the forces of history are working inevitably toward this realization and that we too are cooperating with the inevitable. We can only hope that this is so. But we can know that the forces of human life, struggling to realize itself on its highest plane, are working with us and that those forces need our help desperately.



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*the  
meaning  
of  
communism  
to  
Americans*

SEP 10 1975  
by Richard Nixon

Vice President of the United States

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This is one in a series of discussions  
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